IN THE ABSTRACT

Please amend the abstract to read as follows (an unmarked copy of the amended abstract is set out on a separate sheet attached hereto):

-- A shortest cut duration is a minimum required period between an edit point set on a stream of pictures such as an MPEG stream and the next edit point set on the stream. ~~It is an object of the present invention to make restrictions~~ Restrictions are made on the shortest cut duration lenient in a process to seamlessly reproduce a result of editing the stream in order to enhance the freedom of editing in carrying out a process of editing the stream. ~~In order to achieve this object, a~~ A controller detects each edit point set on the stream and, for the edit point, the controller identifies fewest possible pictures, which are not to be displayed but must be decoded first before decoding a picture to be displayed after the edit point. Then, the controller finds a start point representing a timing to start a process of decoding the one or fewest possible pictures. Subsequently, the controller controls processes carried out by decoders to decode the stream in picture units on the basis of the start point, and controls a switcher to select one of outputs of the decoders on the basis of the edit point. --